

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) A composition of matter ~~consisting essentially of~~ comprising an isolated polypeptide ~~shown in~~ consisting essentially of SEQ ID NO:2 or a phenotypically silent amino acid substitution variant thereof that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody.
2. (Previously Presented) The composition of claim 1, further comprising a carrier.
3. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture comprising packaging material and, contained within the packaging material, a polypeptide ~~consisting essentially of~~ comprising the polypeptide ~~shown in~~ consisting essentially of SEQ ID NO:2 or a phenotypically silent amino acid substitution variant thereof that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody.
4. (Previously Presented) The article of manufacture of claim 3 wherein the packaging material comprises a label that indicates that the polypeptide can be used for the identification of *Ehrlichia* infection in a mammal.
5. (Currently Amended) The article of manufacture of claim 4, wherein the label indicates that identification of an *Ehrlichia* infection is done using a method of detecting presence of antibodies to *Ehrlichia* comprising:
  - (a) contacting a polypeptide ~~consisting essentially of~~ comprising the polypeptide ~~shown in~~ consisting essentially of SEQ ID NO:2 or a phenotypically silent amino acid substitution variant of the polypeptide ~~shown in~~ consisting essentially of SEQ ID NO:2 that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody, with a test sample suspected of comprising antibodies to *Ehrlichia*, under conditions that allow polypeptide/antibody complexes to form; and
  - (b) detecting polypeptide/antibody complexes;wherein the detection of polypeptide/antibody complexes is an indication that an *Ehrlichia* infection is present.

6. (Previously Presented) The article of manufacture of claim 4, wherein the *Ehrlichia* infection is caused by *Ehrlichia canis* or *Ehrlichia chaffeensis*.

7. (Currently Amended) A composition of matter comprising ~~consisting essentially of~~ an isolated polypeptide shown in ~~consisting essentially of~~ SEQ ID NO:2 or a conservative amino acid substitution variant thereof that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody.

8. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture comprising packaging material and, contained within the packaging material, a polypeptide ~~consisting essentially of~~ comprising the polypeptide shown in ~~consisting essentially of~~ SEQ ID NO:2 or a conservative amino acid substitution variant thereof that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody.

9. (Currently Amended) The article of manufacture of claim 4, wherein the label indicates that identification of an *Ehrlichia* infection is done using a method of detecting presence of antibodies to *Ehrlichia* comprising:

(a) contacting a polypeptide ~~consisting essentially of~~ comprising the polypeptide consisting essentially of shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a conservative amino acid substitution variant of the polypeptide shown in ~~consisting essentially of~~ SEQ ID NO:2 that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody, with a test sample suspected of comprising antibodies to *Ehrlichia*, under conditions that allow polypeptide/antibody complexes to form; and

(b) detecting polypeptide/antibody complexes;

wherein the detection of polypeptide/antibody complexes is an indication that an *Ehrlichia* infection is present.

10. (New) A composition of matter comprising an isolated polypeptide that is 20 amino acids in length, which comprises SEQ ID NO:2 or a phenotypically silent amino acid substitution variant thereof that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody.

11. (New) The composition of claim 10, further comprising a carrier.

12. (New) A composition of matter comprising an isolated polypeptide that is 20 amino acids in length, which comprises SEQ ID NO:2 or a conservative amino acid substitution variant thereof that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody.

13. (New) The composition of claim 12, further comprising a carrier.